Folklore in Kentucky

E Lee Talbot
My 240

The folk songs, and play and cance songs, child and nursery rhymes, "Jigs" superstitions and riddles strongly corrobate the theory that most of this folklore came from England. It is so conclusive in reference made to Alice B. Gommus work on "Traditional Child Games of England and Scotland." Practially all of these games and play songs of that work will be found in some form, if not exactly, to those of the Kentucky mountains such as -

England	Kentucky Mountains
Blind Man's Buff	Blindfold
London Bridge	London Bridge
Three Dukes	Three Dukes

The larger number of folk-songs show local touches dealing with some parts of England.

The Entertainment of the Mountains.

Much has been written about kinds of recreation or the lack or means of recreation in the open country in the mountains. Students also speak from actual experience and observation of the plays and games and other forms of recreation. One student handed in a list of seventy-five different plays and games, many of which he knew how to play. One young man furnished a list of ~~one~~ one hundred and fifty. He knew how to play over one hundred. A young lady handed in a list of ninety. She knew how to play seventy. Another young lady furnished a list of eighty-eight.

There is a great wealth of play material in our state, and in the great majority of games violent physical action is demanded.

Many curious Old English customs and superstitions still persist in the Kentucky mountains. The code of social etiquette in the Kentucky mountains is not hampered by much cold and rigid formality. Coquetry and flirting are unknwon.

Kentucky is the most fertile state in the Union for folklore. Composing ballads is not a lost art for the women often compose the ballads, and most of them sing them. One "Mountain Sappho", who lives in Letcher County, composed a beautiful ballad on young Floyd Frazier, who was executed in 1909, for the murder of a woman.

By nature the mountaineer is reverental. Caves are "God's Houses", Suntime is "God's Time" indicated by a mark of charcoal on cabin floors.

English.

The English spoken in Kentucky mountains is abundant proof that the people are of Old English extraction. Many examples of pure Old English, Middle English, and Elizabethian English are common to this section. Words and terms used by Shakespeare and in King James' Version of the Bible, appear in abundance.

The Kentucky mountaineer, as a member of society, is a striking figure. In personal appearance he is tall, angular, and inclined to droop his shoulders. Charles Dickens when he visited Louisville took note of this.

The mountaineer's hospitality and undefiled. When he says, "Light and Set, stranger", he means every word of it, and if you stay all night don't be surprised if he asks you to wait the table.

Hunting is great sport for the children of the mountains. "Strolling around" is a habit of the young people. Seeking adventure is one of their favorite kinds of recreation. The boys of the mountains are interested in snakes, legends, and "swimming holes." The "square dance" is indulged in in the county and the "round dance" in the villages. Also dancing games such as "Skip-to-my-Lou","Charlie" and "Grape-vine Swing."

"Fiddle music" is one of the most popular forms of recreation. Also singing. Economic socials such as "Bean stringings", "apple pealings", and"Quiltings" are a part of their recreation. "Barbacues" are a get together for the community.

The Women of the Mountains.

The women of the mountains are an interesting study. It has been said that thery are sullen and grave, but this is due to the isolation. Race suicide is no question for the Sociologist to struggle with in the mountains. The families range from twelve to fifteen children. The mothers are posessed with genuine maternal instinct.

No Social Castes.

"I'm as good as you are" or "I am as good as he is", is a stock expression. They are born lawyers and politicians. Take to politics "like ducks to water." A natural born orator, the Bible, works on history, and biography are the most prominent where there are books at all. The feud spirit or clan instinct is dying out in the Kentucky mountains. The Kentucky mountaineer is not only a good liver but a fierce hater as well.

Kentucky Boys.

A debate between a Virginia lad and a Kentucky maiden whom he comes to woo. She scorns land and money, and lauds the superior manliness of the Kentucky lads.

Buckskin Boys.

The above adapted to the praises of the"boys" of Owsley County.

Old Man Trouble

In the Baggage Coach Ahead

Old Churchyard

The Drunkard's Dream

Gospel Songs.

The first group are the survivors of English and Scottish originals, found for the most part in the Child collection.

The second groups are apparently of British origin. Material has not been at hand to establish their origin.

The third group are collected more or less closely with American colonial times. For most of them it is fair to infer a British origin.

The fourth; The songs of this group find their common bond in their reference to Ireland, where some of them undoubtedly heard their origin.

The fifth: The songs of this group are based upon incidents or events of the Civil War.

The sixth: The songs of this group relate to pioneer migration westward.

The seventh: This group are of "good-night" type, being the meditations or confession of criminals while in prison, and usually, under sentence of death

The eighth: The songs of this group on epic rather than lyric as are those of seven. They are recitals of local tragedies.

The ninth: The songs of this group relate to various occupational pursuits.

The tenth: The songs of this group are partisan or sectional character.

The eleventh: Love songs.

The twelfth: Contains two parts or dialogue fashion.

The thirteenth: This group contains humorous songs. Some resemble vaudeville.

The fourteenth: Sentimental.

The fifteenth: This group contains sequence songs or number songs, like the German Zaehllieder.

The sixteenth: This group contains songs peculiar to folk-dances, "frolickinge" and movement games of Kentucky.

The seventeenth: This group cannot be individually described. It embraces counting-out rhymes, jigs, lullabies, etc.

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KENTUCKY FOLKLORE

The people who live in the more isolated sections of the mountains have changed little since their ancestors wandered west more than a century ago. They have preserved many old ballads, obsolete expressions, outrun folk-beliefs and the like which have been long forgotten by educated folk in other parts of the United States. Some attempt has been made to record dialect and folk-song and superstitions. Also the old time conundrums, enigmas, charades, fun puzzlers and wisecracks which the hillman lumps together under the name of riddlers. Young folks used to sit around the fireplace and riddle themselves through long winter evenings. Riddles served the purpose of the modern intelligence tests, and the ability to solve puzzles was often taken as an index of general mental development. "Working out riddles" was supposed to be an excellent intellectual discipline, too, and many people put riddles to their children in order to train their minds, just as more sophisticated parents used to urge their children to study Latin and Mathematics. "But seems like folks don't keer nothin about riddles no more" said one old man sadly "I reckon they was kinder durgen" he added. Durgen is a dialect word meaning countryfied or old fashioned.

Riddles

Whut is it walks up hills an down, hollers all day, an sets under the bed all night? A pair boots.

Whut is it goes when the wagon goes, stops when th wagon stops, ain't no good but your can't get on without it. The squeak.

Whut is it gallops down the road on it's head? Horse shoe nail.

At one time a young man was to have been hung. But, if he could ask a riddle no one could work he was to go free. So he asked one they were unable to solve and went free.

We should not draw pictures of their customs of every day life and over look the great outstanding characteristics of the people so readily seem if we look beneath the surface. Their customs usually sprang from necessity, and persist not because the people are queer but because they are useful. We call their way of dressing queer but most mountain women have to wear wide skirts because they have to chase a pig or a chicken from the garden, or go to milk the cow or bring water. Walking up and down hill. So this is just good sense rather than quaint.

The sun bonnet worn in the mountains is very useful in protecting the eyes shading the face, neck and hair, and is inexpensive.

The home knit sox is a very comfortable thing to wear under a stiff leather shoe when walking all day.

Often we see a woman barefoot in the mountains. We should never smile as there is usually a good reason for it. Not due to some queer notion but either to tired feet or to poverty.

Erroneous opinions about marriages are drawn from the extreme cases. On looking up the records one will find the average age is two weeks over twenty and that of the men is two weeks over twenty-two.

Often we see women and girls working in the fields but this is not strange as they love their husbands and brothers and do everything they can to lighten their burdens. A man will use a sled instead of a wagon. A wagon made strong enough to stand the wear there would be so heavy one horse couldn't pull it and he may be too poor to have but one horse. Often they use oxen. A small ox may be bought more cheaply than a horse. He is less care and thrives on less than a horse. One man in plowing high upon a hill said, "I like it up

here." The land doesn't wash and it is cool up here to work. Necessity is the mother of invention with the mountain people, and yet they read their bible and think out some of the most beautiful every day philosophy.

The old time fiddler has been a real value to civilization in aiding the "carrying on" of the old english and scotch popular ballads. As well he has provided entertainment for his family, his neighbors, and himself. He has contributed entertainment and cultural values and has satisfied the burning desire of his soul.

Late in the eighteenth century, when Daniel Boone9and his band of brave companions had made Kentucky territory almost safe for white men's homes, a stream of humanity began pouring in from Virginia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Forerunners came to spy-out the land, and if pleased to pre-empt large tracts to be later divided into farms for their own use and the use of their friends in this marvelously rich section which we know as central Kentucky today. Kentucky was fortunate as these represented the "first" families of Great Britian, Ireland, Scotland, France and Germany. One etriking festure the people coming to a new and unsettled country had to depend so much upon their own for entertainment and surrounded by large companies of slaves they preserved the English language in unusual purity and much of this is found in our mountains as well as fine pieces of furniture and oil paintings, etc.

Having the negro slaves in constant attendance, especially on the children, it was impossible to escape some slight belief in their superstitions. Many a man in that era died believing a dog bite could be cured by a bit of his clipped hair, and shinbles, by smearing on a little fresh blood from a freshly cropped black cats tail.

The Kentucky Folklore S ociety has some

"Country butions"
"Cool as a cucumber"
"Yaller as a pumpkin"
"Green as Grass"
"Brown as a Berry"
"As pore as Jobs turkey"
"Slick as a button"
"Dead as a door nail"

Whatever the fault of the mountain people they had one great thing our own age lacks. A means of community entertainment. For the more highly cultured it had the waltz, the minuet, and other graceful dances a sort of a badge of aristocracy for the intermediate class, who were a bit puzzled about the morality of round dancing, they had singing games, or as they called then play-party games. They also had the breakdown and the _____

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KENTUCKY FOLK-LORE

Christmas was usually a time of gayety, espeoially the burning of the Yule log, as tradition has it. That the gay party lasted in the household until the burning into this Yule log, and in order to make it las as long as possible, it was the custom of the men folk to go out in the woods in early fall and select this log, being very careful to get the largest one in the neighborhood. After they found the one best suited it was cut down and in a great many cases rolled into the creek. There it remained until the approach of the Holiday Season when it was brought in (thoroughly water soaked) to be placed as a "back log" and gayety was to commence, lasting until the log burned in two.

SUPERSTITIONS For instance should you refuse a piece of mince pie at the Christmas table means ill luck for the year, and another, to eat apples at midnight on Christmas Eve, is to enjoy great health during the coming year.

The finding of a bright horshoe in the road, brought home and hung up with the heel of the shoe downward, would ward off all ill luck.

The Unlucky number thirteen Thirteen people must not attend a party, sit at dining table, or in fact thirteen for any kind of gathering was considered very unlucky.

The Black Cat Sould a black cat cross the road or your path ahead of you was, and is now, considered the worse kind of a sign, and sure to bring you bad luck.

To break a mirror is supposed to give you seven years of trouble.

If a sleeping baby smiles, it is a sign that the infant is talking to the angels.

If it rains on Easter it will rain seven Sundays thereafter.

It is bad luck to wear a ring with an opal.

It is bad luck to burn sassafras wood.

All these and thousands more similar, are still in vogue in Kentucky and especially in the mountain sections.

The Song-lore is equally important as the superstitions. Such songs in vogue now are such selections as "I went up to Odd-Fellows Hall", what the words run thus:

"I went up to Odd Fellow's Hall
Had a good time, dat was all;
Hats an cuffs all lyin on de flo,
I bet six bits - all I had
Nigger bet seven - made me mad.
To that coon I could not help but say,
"Get off my money - don't you hit my honey
Cause I'm a nigger - don't cut no figger
I'm gambling for my Sadie - she's a lady-
I'm a hustlin coon, that's what I am.

Ruby J Barker
Union Co. Ky.

American Guide Project

About Folkways and Folklore

Superstitions

I went to visit my Mother-in-law on New Year's Day and when I got there she told me that she wished that I had waited until another day to visit her because if the first visitor on New Year's Day was a female all the pigs, lambs and calves born during the year would be female and she wanted them to be male because they were worth more in price.

If anyone spilled salt on the tablecloth ot absolutely had to be burned because it would bring bad luck.

If a dog rolled in the yard with its tail pointing towards the road someone had to make ittget up because it meant that a stranger would come.

Home Life

In olden times we didn't buy seed in packages like we do now. We saved our own seed. Seed then didn't have any particular name for that kind or variety. If I gave you a package of bean seed, you named them Mayme beans after me, and if you gave anyone else seed, they called their seed by your name.

When a couple marries now they want to save a lot of money before they marry..I remember hearing my cousin tell my mother that his son was going to be married and that he had a whole hog and a half hog, a big pot and a little pot, pot hooks and a skillet. and he thought that he was mighty well fixed to go to housekeeping. These were some of the cooking utensils used then.

My Maternal Great Grandmother was never seen without knitting. She always had tow barrels of socks and stockings knitted for Christmas for the slaves. They were made from black sheeps wool which they spun and carded themselves. She could knit a pair of socks in a day. She also wove the cloth for the men and Womens clothing. This was made from white sheeps wool and dyed different colors with barks from different trees. She always kept one or two colored women to help at the loom.

Back in the days before we had any banks my Great Grandmother kept her money in gold in bags in a Cedar Chest in one corner of her room. If a man gave his note he stood good for it himself. He didn't have any surety. Loans were made and "I'll just let you have that", with no scratch of the pen.

Our dishes were all of china.They were mostly "Old Chelsea" and were brought from England.

A great many people had silver. It was a beautiful old custom for the mother of the family to serve coffee in silver cups from a large silver tray at the head of the table. A negro servant stood at her side and passed the cups.

Before there were any screens we kept the windows open and let the flies buzz in and out. When a meal was served someone stood over the table with a fly brush and kept the flies away. Some of these were made of paper on a stick. Sometimes a branch of a tree was used. We had a very beautiful one made from the center rib of a peacocks tail. The feathers were stripped to the end feathers . These ribs looked like ivory. The brush part was made of the eye of the peacocks feathers and was very soft and beautiful. We kept the brush for years for a keepsake.

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Home Life

We used to knit our own stockings out of the wool which we carded and spun ourselves. We wove our own petticoats too. They were called "balmoral". We made them a solid color. If we made a gray skirt we would put maybe a blue stripe above the knees. We made blankets the same way. We made most of the colors ourselves. We used walnut hulls to color brown. It was a beautiful shade of brown. We often mixed our colors to make different colors. If we had yellow we would mix blue with it to make green.

Back in the days before we had reapers and binders we harvested our wheat by hand. We cut the wheat with a cradle and then tied it with straw twisted together long enough to hold a good size bundle together.

We used to not have any sawmills. About the only tool I was ever interested in was an "adz". My father used that to hew sills for barns and houses out of logs. He would begin at the end of the log and remove all the bark and make it smooth on all sides. I remember a bed that my father made. It was made from logs cut smooth on all sides with this adz. He bored holes in the side railing and put heavy ropes from one side to the other. These ropes took the place of springs and slats.

We used to wear basques and skirts. These skirts were made full of gathers at the waist. We wore hoops and bussles. These bussles were tied on at our waist and filled up the fullness of these skirts. We wore sunbonnets made from cloth or straw instead of hats. We wore high top brogan shoes.

We kept our food in cellars which we made in the ground. They were simply holes dug in the ground covered over with poles and boards and then covered over with dirt. We kept the milk in a spring to keep cold. I remember my sister putting a jar of cream in the spring one day when my mother had gone away from home. She aimed to churn this cream and make some butter so she could sell it and buy her a new dress. When she went to get the cream a big turtle had turned the cream over and supped it all up.

We made candles two ways. One way was by molds. We would buy the wicks in a ball like string. We put these wicks through these tube like molds and tied the wicks at the bottom. Then we would fill these molds with tallow that we had saved from the beaves that we had killed. When the tallow was cold and could be taken from the molds we cut the wicks and removed the candles. Sometimes we would have a whole table full of candles. It took a good many because if anyone sewed after dark it always took two. The children always used so many. Another way we made candles was to tie the wicks to a stick

With a small weight tied to the end of the wick. We dipped the wicks in the melted tallow and let them harden. When they were hard we dipped them again until we had them as big as we wanted them. Them we would cut the wicks and they were ready for use.

We bought all our coffee green and parched it ourself.in an oven. Then we ground it on a hand mill.

We didn't have any way of taking our poultry to market. When we sold our turkeys we had to drive them to market. If a dog should run into the flock and scare them they would scatter for half mile around and we would have to wait and call them home and start all over again.

Method of telling time

There was an old timekeeper in this neighborhood. He kept time by a glass tube with sand in it. It took exactly an hour for the sand to run from the top of this glass tube to the bottom. When the hour passed and the sand had run from the top of the glass tube the time keeper would strike a steel hoop for the hour. If it was three o'clock he would strike it three times. When the sand in the glass tube had run to the bottom again he would strike the steel hoop four times. The sound could be heard for miles and miles.

Another way of telling time was by your shadow. At noon you can stand on your own shadow. At a certain time of day you could mark where your shadow was and then you could always tell by where your shadow fell about what time it was.

We used to cook on an open fire place. We would bake bread in an old fashioned oven and lid. We put this oven with our bread in it on a bed of coals and covered it over with coals. It baked our bread an even brown. We cooked in old Dutch pots hung from cranes in the old open fireplace. The fire was made from back logs. We didn't use coal like we do now.

We used to have log rollings. We didn't have sawmills so if they cleared the ground up the trees had to be cut down and burned. We had born raisings and used all the logs we could to keep from burning them.

I don't know all the words to this song but I'll sing what I know:

Miss Lizzie

I went to see Miss Lizzie
She met me at the door
Shoes and stockings in her hands
And her feet all over the floor.

I told her she was pretty,
But she looked like an Indian squaw,
She threw one shoe out of her hand
And hit me in the jaw.

Bam Bam Bagillion

My ole massa promised me, that when he died he'd set me free,
So I ain't'goin to work any more.
(chorus) Bam Bagillion, Bam Bagillion
Bam,Bam, Jim and Sam
I ain't goin to work any more.

Homemade Medicines

Linament made from two eggs beaten, one half teacup vinegar, equal parts of turpentine, coal oil and camphor and hartshorn is a good remedy for rheumatism and sore muscles.
Catnip tea is good for colds.
Candy made from sugar and the juice from horehound leaves is good for colds.

Signs

If a crow holloed it meant rain.
If the sun went down cloudy on Friday nite the next day would be pretty.
A ring around the moon with so many stars around meant that it would be as many days as there was stars until we would have rain.
Fire crackling meant that we would have snow.

I still go by the sign of the moon to make soap. I always make sopp in the full of the moon. Meat killed in the wroun moon will swivvle up. Potatoes planted in the wrong moon will be all vines and no potatoes.

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Homemade Medicines & Preventatives.

Lard, coal oil, turpentine, camphor, quinine and nutmeg is good for a deep chest cold.
Lemon and salt prevents cold.
Whiskey, licorice, and sugar make a good cough medicine.

Warts are taken off by tying a knot in a black thread and counting the warts. Throw the string away and when it has rotted the warts will come off.

Styes are charmed away by throwing a stick over the shoulder at a cross road and saying, "sty, sty leave my eye, catch the next one passing by."

A good remedy for a rising in the head is to put as many bird shot (beaten flat) on a string as the child is months old. If the child is five months old put five bird shot, six months old, six bird shot etc.

Superstitions

If a rocking chair is left rocking it will bring bad luck.
A bird pecking on the window sill is a sign of death.
Its bad luck for a cow to bawl after sun down.
A black cat crossing the road in front of you meant bad luck.
If you get a hair cut in March you'll die before the next March.
If you started to cut and sew anything on Friday You'd die before you got it made.

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Home Life

I can remember when we didn't have any matches. We used flax to build a fire with. We would strike an Indian arrow head with the blade of a steel knife to make the spark to catch the flax afire. When the flax caught we would put the kindling and back logs on the fire. We didn't have any matches for years after that.

We used to dry peaches and apples in a kiln. It was made of brick two or three feet wide and about that deep. A fire was built on the inside and the fruit was spread on the top. We had to turn the fruit over from time to time. The heat from the kiln would dry it. We would have apple peelings and all the neighbors would come in and help peel the apples.

We used to make home made soap with grease and lye. We made the lye that we used. We had an ash hopper made of boards. We filled that with wood ashes and then poured so much water over them and let it run through. That made the lye. We added the grease to this and cooked it in a big iron kettle until it was done. We sometimes used a sassafras stick to stir this soap with and this stick would flavor the soap.

We had a maple sugar camp on our farm. In the spring of the year when the sap was we tapped our fifty or sixty trees. This was done by boring a hole in the tree with an auger. We put a spout like concern in this hole and placed a bucket under it to catch the water that dripped from the tree. We put the water in a big iron kettle and cooked it down into a syrup. If we wanted maple sugar we would boil it down and mold in molds. We had our own iron molds like muffin tins.

We made bowls, pitchers and plates out of blue clay. Sometimes we had molds but most of the time we molded them ourselves. We dried these things in the kiln. When they dried they were a dull gray and looked like earthenware, but were not polished. They were good to use in the kitchen and would hold water or anything like anyother dish.

I didn't have any bought shoes until I was five years old. My mother made my shoes out of cow hide that she had tanned. That was back in 1887. She had awls, gimblets, hammers, and a shoe last. We fastened them with raw-hide strings through eyelets that were punched with an awl. They were brown and rough looking but that was all we had.

Bobbie M. Henry, WPA, Ky.

The beginnings of folklore and ancient beliefs lie, in most instances, far back in the most primitive periods of the human race. Conjecture is often the only means of seeking their origin, but the proverbs, warnings and prophecies offer food for thought and speculation.

The origin of all superstition may probably be traced to the desire of mankind to propitiate fate, to avert evil, and to dispel the mystery of life and of the universe. Primitive man in his fear of evil that he did not understand, sought to avoid disaster by any means that he could find. In his ignorance of logic, he often accepted a coincidence as a cause.

Inasmuch as the beginnings of folklore lie in nearly all instances far back in the most primitive periods of the human race, conjecture is often the only means of seeking them.

In consideration of the distribution of folklore in Kentucky, it may as well be remembered that there are three some what different classes of people within the State: the mountain whites, originally from Virginia and the Carolinas; the lowland whites, originally from Virginia, the Carolinas, Pennsylvania, and Maryland; and the lowland Negroes. The first and the third of these classes have been less influenced either by immigration or by education than the second..... Most Kentucky superstitions are common to all three classes of the people because the superstitions of Kentucky are in almost all cases not recent inventions but old survivals from a time when they were generally accepted by all Germanic peoples and even by all Indo-Europeans.....

Until the past decade, the life in much of the mountain region of Kentucky has been isolated and primitive.....Along with feuds, illicit stills, emotional religion and genuine hospitality which are characteristics of the pinched life in the mountain fastnesses, folk superstitions have survived with great tenacity.....The superstitious beliefs still retained

by the old-type mountaineers are in general those that were brought to Kentucky by their English and Scotch-Irish ancestors. Many are concerned with good and bad luck signs more or less familiar to those which have survived in other places.....Folk remedies and medicines are, also, very widely trusted by the highlanders.

One of the most remarkable classes of folklore survivals in the mountains of Kentucky is that of witch-lore. Perhaps there is no other place in the English-speaking parts of the world where superstitions concerning witches receive so much credence.

As the lowland whites of Kentucky are more numerous, more varied, and geographically more widely spread than either the Negroes of the Bluegrass and the western parts of the State or the white people of the mountains, probably as many individual superstitions may be gleaned among them as among either the Negroes or the mountaineers. Naturally they are more fully current in small towns and in country districts than in cities, and more fully among children and illiterates than among educated adults.

The following are suggested topics for folklore:

(1) Unprinted songs and ballads

(2) Unrecorded legends (Locality legends and yarns)

(3) Dialect terms

(4) Community sayings

(5) Signs

(6) Superstitions

(7) Sympathetic magic

Witchcraft

Charms

Cures

(8) Customs peculiar to the State

Folk songs classified under the following heads:

Those about outlaws

Those of which animals are heroes

Dance songs

Religious songs

Drinking and gambling songs

Plantation melodies

Songs connected with railroad building

The Wanderings of a Folksong

Ex.: "The Lover's Test" - A lover returns incognito after long absence, tests her fidelity by recounting his death, at which she weeps, proving her faithfulness. Thereupon he reveals his identity and they are married.

European versions

Shakespeare's version in Hamlet

Goldsmith's version in Vicar of Wakefield

Three Kentucky versions found in Pike Co., Knott Co. and Shelby Co. The original of the Shelby Co. version was found in manuscript over 100 years old in the possession of Mr. Ben Allen Thomas and in many respects is very unusual.

Other well known ballads

"John Riley" from McCracken Co.

"The Hangman's Son" from Harlan Co.

"Little Sparrow" from Knott Co.

"Frog Went A-Courtin'" from Estill Co.

"Bonnie Prince Charlie" - an English song descended from Jacobite rising of 1745 Revolutionary days.

"Old Gray Mare"

Songs connected with drinking and gambling were popular. For example:

"Way up on Clinch mountain I wander alone:
I'm es drunk es the devil;
Oh, let me alone!"

From Kentucky mountains comes "Liza Jane." There were versions of this ballad in many southern states. One verse of the Kentucky version reads:

"Go up on the mountain top
To plant me a patch of cane
To make me a barrel of molasses
to sweeten up Lizie Jane."

From Harlan Co. comes:

"Shady grove, my little love,
Shady grove, my darling;
Shady grove, my little love
Going back to Harlan."

The small number of tunes as compared with the songs in circulation may often account for the mixing of ballads.

A formula used by the "marryin' squire" was:

"Ovuh the hill an daown the holluh
S'lute yuh bride an gimme a dolluh."

In the mountains the run-away marriage is considered the proper form, the home or church wedding being practically unknown.

On the Ohio

From Kentucky: Negroes

High, ho, the boatman row!
Sailin' daown the river on the Ohio
Hay! yaller gal, when yuh gwine
tuh go,
Sailin' daown de ribber on de Ohio? etc.

Sandy

From Kentucky:

A well-preserved version of an old Scotch song.

There Was an Old Man

There was an old man
came over the Dee;
Ha! ha! ha! but I won't have him!
Came over the Dee, a-courtin' me,
With his old beard so newly shaven. etc.

Some Negro Spirituals from Louisville:-

Taken from a collection made by teachers in the colored schools of Louisville. They are songs known from childhood, heard from fathers and mothers.

Ex.:

I've been wandering
I've been wandering Lord;
I've been wandering
A long way from home.

I've been waiting etc.

" " praying "

I'll see heaven

(K. H. R. 050 K. 3755)

Kentucky Folklore and Poetry Magazine - Jan.-July, 1928

Old Locke is a-moving, a variation of "Oh, the Ole Ark's a movering"

Many of these rhymes have a wide currency and are well known to students of folklore. Others are less familiar.

Dialect - survivals of Early Syntax

(1) One of the commonest Kentucky archaisms is the omission of the pronoun subject. It is really a traditional Indo-Europeanism, not corruption or mere carelessness.

Ex.: "I couldn't tell which from t'other."

"I've seen some people that when you got used to 'em, they didn't seem so tacky." (Metcalfe Co.)

"I was so glad whenever I found out that it happened." (Wayne Co.)

(2) Archaic double comparison is one of the most striking features of Elizabethan English. It flourishes in folk speech, as in Julius Caesar - "This was the most unkindest cut etc."

"Hit's more safer." (Lexington, Ky.) (Hit for it, as every one knows is perfectly good Old and Middle English)

Ghost-es, vest-es, post-es are in harmony with the Elizabethan origin, as in King James bible - lov-ed.

Old English indefinite articles were "one" and "some" (as in the 13th cent. Eastern Kentucky survivals are "all on one summer's day." "She looks like some pink rose."

English has always had an adverbial "all," as "I am all tired out," "all at once," "all agog." But bolder yet is its use in Eastern Kentucky. "All on next morning when she arose -" "All in her right hand she held a sharp knife."

An archaic omission of the subject pronoun survives in these ballads: "So early next morning (I) was sorry to say,""Together (they) did wander." Conversely the pronoun is often inserted uselessly:- "Lord lovely he stood," "Someone they forged a letter." Another curious pronominal is "thees" for "thy" as "I hate thees company."

The relative pronoun has always been easily omitted: "Jesse had a wife was the joy of his life."

The useful expletive "it" outdoes itself in the ballads:
"Its down on his coffin, poor Downey he did kneel."

Early English sixteenth century writings long used "were" with a singular subject as in Sheridan's Rivals (1775) "It wern't fit to read;" in Dickens, "Yes, it were," and in the lingo of Tennyson's Yorkshire Farmer, who says, "I were niver agin." So in the Kentucky mountains it survives as: "Once there were a silk merchant," "Dinah were sitting" etc.

The old English irregular verb had usually two past forms one sing., one plural. Modern English has retained sometimes one, sometimes the other and so the Kentucky mountaineer likewise makes his choice of:
"et" for "ate,""driv" for drove," "writ" for "wrote," "clumb" for "climbed,"

"drug" for "dragged," "catched" for"caught," etc., and his songs exemplify freely the old past and participial ending - en, as:

"They laughen as they passed by"

"Hangen I was to be." etc.

Also in the use of the infinitive:

"If I had not a killed Frank Salyers I would not have had to died." (a past infinitive)

"They sent him up to London, an apprentice for to bind" (a passive infinitive)

Among phonetic survivals is the Old English confusion of final d and t as: "I wish I had my little bow bend."

The mountaineer is ingenious in metamorphosing an obscure or to him meaningless word as "dead-bell" for "death bell" "screaks," a blend of screams and shrieks, "forthwide" for "forthwith" - some of these common in England today. Of the same general origin are the tautological compounds analogous to hedge-fence, old-veteran, conch-shell; in the folk songs we find "cane-staff," "brooch-pin," "rifle-gun," "scarlet-red." These folk songs are a treasure-trove of old words. Among them are: "well-a-way," alas; "list," stripe; "fancy," love: "the riddle," explain; "to roll a song," to sing lustily; "fee," a wife's dowry - etc.

In some sections of Kentucky there is a mingling of two currents of speech-the mountain dialect and that of the soft-speaking gentry of the Bluegrass or Pennyr'yal.

Certain counties of Central Kentucky have remarkable local variations. The narrow valleys of Owen and Franklin counties harbor some curious archaisms as well as astonishingly vigorous folklore and customs. Barren and Metcalfe

are slightly diverse in accent. Along the foothills in Fleming, Bath, Clark, Estill, Madison and on to Green and Cumberland certain families speak the mountain dialect, while adjoining groups have the softer lowland speech. A faint trace of mountain speech runs westward through the coal section almost to the Tennessee River. On the other hand in the heart of the mountains some of the best-educated families have the lowland accent and are indistinguishable from the Louisvillian.

Forms of wit and humor which enliven the carefree moments of people:-

(1) Sharp answers, viz.:

"What fur?" "Cat fur - to make kitten breeches."

"Go to hell!" "All right. Give me the keys." etc.

(2) Catches and paradoxes.

(3) Salutations or greetings - viz.:

"Scratch under and come in."

(4) Grim warnings, viz.:

"I'll let daylight shine through you" etc.

(5) Exaggerations - viz.:

"A farmer makes three barrels of vinegar out of seven apples." "A man so tall he pays no poll tax - his head is out of the county." "If you find an honest nigger, you'll find a patch of hair in the palm of his hand."

(6) Understatements.

(7) Grotesque expressions, viz.:

Corn wagon for thunder storm, "He spoke a parable for "he told the truth."

(8) Comparisons - viz.:

"He looks like the hind wheels of bad luck." etc.

(9) Stories told to surprise

(10)Stories told to tease

(11)Stories told to explain names

(12)Stories of pranks of great men

(13)Moral stories

(14)Nature fakes

Kentucky Superstitions

(1) Birth and child life

(2)Family relations

(3) Lost articles

(4) Wishes

(5) Divinations

(6) Marriage

(7) Death and burial

(8) The human body

(9) Saliva

(10)Sneezes

(11) Cures and preventives

(12) Fire

(13) Household and domestic life

(14) Dreams

(15) Dress

(16) Shadows and reflections

(17) Moon and signs of the Zodiac

(18) Weather

(19) Days and seasons

(20) Crops, vegetables, fruits, trees

(21) Money

(22) Walking forth - travel

(23) Letters

(24) Mines

(25) Color

(26) Numbers

(27) Sports

(28) Luck at cards

(29) Animals, birds, insects and reptiles

(30) Witches

(31)Hoodoos

(32) Haunted houses, ghosts, evil spirits

Moon Signs

(1) Good luck to see the new moon clear of clouds.

(2) Use of the forked stick or the projecting index and little finger.

(3) Giving the moon a silver penny.

(4) Show your pocketbook to the new moon.

(5) Bathe only in the dark of the moon.

(6) The man in the moon is carrying brush for working on Sunday.

Cures - Animals - Bad luck superstitions - Good luck superstitions

Superstitions concerning cures and prevention of disease occupy a large space. Many of them being based upon sound knowledge of electrical and meteorological facts.

Some of the quaint cures are:

A cure for nightmare is found by turning the shoes upside down with the toes toward the head of the bed.

For a snake bite, bury the wounded part in the earth.

Warts seem to need more charms than almost any other physical ailment.

One of the most curious and universal of all superstitions and dates far back into antiquity--its origin difficult to trace--is connected with the use of saliva.

"Spit between two fingers then you will not have bad luck when you see a white horse."

Sympathetic magic in Eastern Kentucky groups itself into two leading divisions - witchcraft in its various forms, and the more ancient belief in charms.

Here are some of the things witches do in the Kentucky mountains: They transfor certain individuals into horses and ride them all night, restoring them to their natural shapes before daylight.

Cows are bewitched and do not "give down" their milk.

Churns are bewitched and in order to break the spell a silver coin is placed in the bottom of it.

Witches often metamorphose themselves into black cats and toads when they go about their mischief-making. For this reason it is bad luck to injure a cat or toad.

There are two ways of protecting oneself against witches - by soliciting the services of a witch doctor and by resorting to charms.

The second division of sympathetic magic, charms, is covered by a number of superstitions in the Kentucky mountains. We find charms against inflammation, carnivorous fowls, droughts, spirits or ghosts, warts, and many kinds of diseases.

Charms for making one love you are many.

Louisville Negroes say when you yawn cover your mouth with your hand to prevent an evil spirit from entering your body and taking possession of it. From western Kentucky comes this charm against ghosts: to frighten them on a dark night, cross the left thumb over the index finger, draw a long breath and exclaim, "Ship-i-rol."

Perhaps the animal best loved of the superstition-maker is the cat--especially the black cat.

Sometimes he brings bad luck, sometimes good.

Dogs have, also, their place in good-and-bad luck signs. If a dog howls, turn over a shoe and danger will be averted.

Kentucky wedding customs, survivals from many generations past. Many of them exist in other sections and among other races. A few are unique in our state.

On the way to a wedding the bride must ride on a mare rather than a horse, and the bridegroom vice versa. The bride should not ride a gray steed.

To go through a spider web is especially good luck.

If a bat flies into the room it is bad luck.

Good weather is greatly desired - a thunderstorm during the wedding is particularly bad.

Bride must not see the groom on the wedding day before the ceremony.

Bride must not look into a mirror as the last act before her marriage.

There should be no mirror in the room where the wedding takes place.

Superstitions Concerning Love

Majority apply to the feminine rather than masculine sex.

(1) Concerning sweethearts

(2) Wedding prophecies

(3) Matrimonial chances

(4) Future mate

Primitive Methods of the Farm

Houses: Methods used in building, with no tools but an auger and an ax.

All hewing done to a line struck with a cord dipped in pokeberry juice.

Raising food - signs governing planting.

Methods of keeping food in winter.

Transportation problems.

Treatment for disease -

Native herbs used.

Often magic was invoked such as: the breath of the seventh son of the seventh son would heal disease

Plant Lore

Folk names of plants, viz.:

Butter and eggs(linaria) - spring beauty, known in the mountains as "good-morning-spring."

Plant called "heal-all," another called "back-ache-root," another "colic-root," often given to babies.

Sassafras to "thin the blood" - pennyroyal, gathered in certain phases of the moon, for colds.

"Plant beans in the morning and they will come up two weeks sooner."

"Never thank anyone for a plant given to you or it will not grow."

"Plant corn after the woodpecker comes."

In connection with animal lore, this comes from Louisville: In the same class of animals as the crayfish is a very humble specimen known as a "sowbug" or "pillbug." It is believed dangerous to kill this bug as the creature can give the hydrophobia to the one who kills it. Hence sowbugs are called mad dogs.

Old-time Kentucky Customs

The button string which had a vogue in Kentucky a century ago, consisted in collecting fancy buttons and stringing them on a cord.

An old-time custom which seems to have died out almost entirely was the use of fireworks at Christmas. In the smaller Kentucky towns Christmas vied with

the Fourth of July in the use of fireworks. How the custom started no one seems to know.

The old-time hitching rack in many county seats is still not only a convenience but a necessity. The Union County Advocate recently printed a rural subscriber's complaint that farmers do not need a community house so much as they need more hitching places, livery stables and public drinking troughs.

Old-time town crier is another institution that has all but passed out in Kentucky. He

~~Other days~~ was the original publicity herald of other days.

Old-time medicine troupe

" " ice harvesting

" " almanac

" " log-rolling

Old-time quilting party

" " water witch

" " square dance

" " singing customs

" " New Year's Day which was the occasion for a general hiring of farm hands, kind of employment, wages, etc.

Dress:- wide, full skirt, sun bonnet.

Home-knit sox

Barefoot in summer.

Early marriages -

Home and farm duties

Milking cows

Digging wells

Horse shoeing

In the lowlands ladies often rode out to the fox hunt. Every lady owned a collection of shawls - her only wraps - heavy woolens for warmth, broche and chine for light wear and black silk lace for summer.

Leghorn scoop bonnets. Travel was on horseback, family carriages were seldom used being set apart for mothers and children. Meat was salt-cured and smoked in sufficient quantity to feed the family for a yoar until the next killing season arrived. Fruits were preserved in sugar or dried. The wool-clip, flax crop, cotton crop were followed by a busy time at brakes, frails, hackles, spinning wheels, winding blades, reels, looms and the slave girls were put to the task of making winter clothing. The mistress was taught how to do this work and directed her slaves.

Beef clubs

Singing Games

Meaningless words often found in these games, often serve as a chant to keep the game going - words have marked rythm.

"Style of the Army"

"Skip to My Lou"

"Pig in the Parlor"

and that game so typical of Kentucky, "Chase (or Shoot) the Buffalo." (The words of this game are from Hopkins Co.)

"Virginia Reel," "Whoa Mule," "Punkin' Vines," "'Taint Goin' to Rain" The square dances, the singing and games with their variations, form a body of folklore of endless extent.

Some games which the people play are:

A translation

Club Fist; The Way to London Town; William Trembletoe; Chickamy Craney-Crow; Marching 'Round the Levee (Love Ring) is not only played by children but young men and women.

Clap in, Clap out; The Jolly Miller; Counting the Appleseeds - a game played by grandmothers and grandfathers.

Green Leaf so Green; Turn a Hillside Plow; Pickle and Pop; Stealing Grapes;

Green Gravel; Diggin' a Well, Etc.

Coffee Grows on a White Oak Tree is a dancing game in which any number of players may take part. It came from Estill Co. Also from Estill Co. is the singing game, Jenny put the Kittle On.

From Carter Co. comes the game, "Irish Potatoes Tops and All"

From Wolfe Co. comes "Green Gravel"

Rockcastle Co. - "Digging Silver"- Madison Co. "Skip to My Lou," a dancing game played by grown-ups.

From Breathitt Co. comes a May Day superstition. The young girls of Breathitt Co. walk out early on May Day morning each year to try their fortunes. If they see a snail in the path with its horns stretched out, then they know their love is true to them. If the snail is coiled in its shell or dead their love will prove untrue.

Curious Folk Survivals (Kentucky Journal of American Folklore)

Belief in witchcraft

Protection against witches - witch doctors and charms

Ex.: Charm against inflammation (from England)

"There were two angels came from the East;
One brought fire, the other frost;
Out fire, in frost!"

Hyaway Jack - Hyaway Jill

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WPA, Ky.

Folk Lore- Superstitions

Superstitious beliefs are far more widespread and persistent today than will be admitted by many people. That they swayed the minds and conduct of the folk of earlier centuries is readily conceded, for even the literature of Shakespeare's day is generously sprinkled with it. The sophisticated citizen of advanced 20th century intelligence and education, however, is loath to admit its influence in present-day living. Primitive man restorted to superstition to alleviate fear, avert fate and evil, and dispel the mystery of life. People are slow to surrender inherited beliefs, and, in spite of science and religion, still find life inexplicable. An authority on superstitions beliefs, Daniel L. Thomas, after reviewing thousands of superstitions found within the limited confines of Kentucky, says, "Superstitions have disappeared from no community in our country. "

Some of the more general superstitions include the bad luck bogie attached to Friday, the number 13, breaking a mirror, the gift of a knife (or other sharp instrument) to a friend, opening an umbrella in the house, howling of a dog at night, turning back after a start has been made.

Wishing on the new moon is practiced in the Bluegrass, which is one of the most sophisticated and cultured areas of Kentucky, as well as in the mountains and western sections of the State, variations of the wishing signs prevailing in the different localities.

There are a vast number of mountain superstitions relative to childbirth. Here originated the alluring belief that a baby's smile, in sleep, indicates that the angels are talking to the child. A child born on Christmas Day is credited with understanding the language of animals. Bald headed babies are fine stock, according to a central Ky. superstition. A large mouth indicates that the baby will be a good singer. A western Ky. super-

stition says it is bad luck to count the baby's teeth. If a daughter resembles its father, and a son its mother, it is good luck, although a child named for its mother is unlucky, superstition says.

Many superstitions are attached to funerals and mourning, and a horde of mountain beliefs are clustered about coffins.

Hundreds of unique beliefs about weather indications and conditions are prevalent in the consciousness of thousands of Ky. people. Many of these are rank superstitions, others are based on observations and deductions of the soil, while many aspects have a distinct connection with facts of meteorology. Examples of these include a superstition of the enlightened Bluegrass section that a flock of crows indicates a change in the weather, a central Ky. belief that the cows coming home in midday portends a storm, a western Ky. belief that the first thunder of spring awakens the snakes, also that the first 4 days of the year indicates what the weather is to be for the ensuing year. In the mountains, it is the first 12 days of the year.

Similarly, beliefs about physical disability vary, some of them being inconceivably foolish while others are concerned, more or less remotely, with recognized principles of hygienic living. Thus beliefs regarding eating too much meat, salt, pickles, onions, may be, in some measure, protective.

Witches, sickness and death, being life's most feared experiences, furnish to mountain folklore rare richness of beliefs. Red flannel plays its part in cases of toothache, and fat meat is widely used for poultices. There are innumerable dream prophecies.

In the treatment of disease among primitive mountain people there is evidence of a mixture of religious faith, and the use of many varieties of alleged healing agencies. Someone has said that one-half of the medical practice of these people was trust in God, the other half, herbs. These include, of barks, wild cherry, slippery elm, beech, dogwood, pine, elder,

shumach and redwood. Eating onions to build up courage, and cabbage to prevent cowardice are accepted omens. A hundred varieties of cures for warts are revealed in Ky. superstitions. Most of these are variations of bleeding, rubbing, and burying. Fantastic measures, as for example washing the face nine times in a wood cavity filled with water, are practiced for removing freckles. Cutting the finger nails every Friday is regarded as a preventive for ill luck in some sections, while itch can be relieved by wearing a yarn string about the finger. A popular superstition regarding alleviation of toothache is wearing a bone suspended on a string around the neck. Another is to mix salt and sulphur and smoke it in a new stone pipe. Beads should be put about the baby's neck for the season of cutting its first teeth is a mountain county superstition.

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FOLKLORE

A person suffering from nosebleed can stop the blood by holding a dime under the tongue. If the blood fails to clot, a pair of scissors or a door key tied to a string and slipped up and down the patients back will give relief. The colder the scissors the quicker the surcease. Hiccups are immediately cured by angering the patient, or by throwing cold water in his face or by drinking nine sips of water. Sores on the feet, legs and arms in the fall are called "fall sores". They are due to the poisons of "dog days" There isn't much cure for them. Brown sugar mixed with lamp oil helps a little. A fat meat poultice helps. The main thing is to keep out of the dew and not go swimming in anything but spring water. The only cure for poison ivy is buttermilk and salt, applied constantly until the affection is gone. The person must not work or get hot while afflicted. For vomiting headache, rub camphor on the forehead and bind the head with a flannel. It is sometimes necessary for a patient to go to bed. If it is rheumatism, bind the afflicted part or parts with ringlets of red flannel. Relief will come within twenty-four or forty-eight hours. Crickets may be cured likewise. Bare the stomach of the colic sufferer and rub the adomen vigorously with the bone from a hog's foot. Toothache is cured by smoking strong homemade tobacco. You can be rid of warts by stealing a dish cloth and bathing the warts and hanging the cloth on a limb or burying it, or feed chickens crumbs sprinkled with wart blood. Cut notches in a young tree and as the tree heals, the warts leave. To charm a stye off the eye, sing "Stye, stye, leave

my eye - Catch the next that passes by."

To avoid witches the men wear their sox wrong side out, or turn their pockets inside out. To cure croup, pass the child rapidly to and fro through a horse collar. Red strings or a flattened bullit around the neck is effective. Hold a baby suffering with thrush under a wide open chimney until it gasps three times. A child's nails must be bitten off until he is over a year old. If they are cut off, it predisposes him to steal. If a child is delicate, have an old woman to measure it. If three times its diameter does not equal its height, it has decay. Roast an egg and if it bursts, the child will die. Polecat grease applied to rheumatic regions is efficacious. Also put fishing worms in a bottle by the fire. When the oil has covered them, mix the slime with an equal part of brandy and apply to parts affected. This is good for snake bites. Mountain tea is good for whooping cough. Smoke mullen for catarrh. An onion poultice for frosted hands and feet. Bind clean earthworms on bloodpoisoning and let stay for three days - the worms draw out the poison. Ginger tea once a day will cure cronic cramps. Sliced bloodroot and vinegar applied to tetter cures it. King's evil is cured by poulticing with boiled carrots.

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by B. Hardin

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Ky.-232
Lucien Beckner

KENTUCKY RIFLE

The Kentucky rifle was named for the backwoodsmen of the pioneer state of the West, who used it with such telling expertness in their defense against Indian and British foes and in their struggle for safety and agricultural independence against wild beasts.

When Boone returned from his first explorations of Kentucky, in 1770, the American flint-lock rifle had been made in Pennsylvania for several decades and had become the only firearm the backwoodsmen would use. It filled the need for a weapon of great efficiency for Indian warfare and big game hunting. Its range was three times that of the smooth-bore muskets that preceded it, its trajectory was flatter, its use of ammunition was more economic, and its accuracy incomparably greater.

As Kentucky's position as the van of Anglo-Saxon settlement developed and the fame of her hunters and Indian fighters grew, their favorite weapon, the long rifle, became known as the "Kentucky Rifle," the name appertaining to the type regardless of where individuals within the type had been made.

Expert rifle-makers were in Kentucky from the beginning of its settlement. Squire Boone, brother of Daniel, who had learned the trade in Pennsylvania, had a shop at Boonesborough and made many rifles in Kentucky during the Revolution and subsequent Indian wars.

The troops of Gen. George Rogers Clark, in his conquest of Illinois, used the Kentucky Rifle. In the battles of Tippecanoe, the Thames, New Orleans, and in all the battles of the War of 1812 fought in by

Kentuckians, the Kentucky Rifle wassused. By means of the Kentucky Rifle the boundary line of the United States was shifted from the Ohio River to the Great Lakes.

At the Battle of New Orleans the British, moving in formation, and thinking themselves safe because out of musket-range, were mowed down by the long Kentucky Rifles. When Napoleon heard of the battle and of the rifle that was so effective in repulsing the English, he decided to use it in his own army but Waterloo came and his plan was never carried out.

The Kentucky Rifle played a prominent part in equipping the early trappers in the Rocky Mountains. Kit Carson, a Kentuckian and famous scout, used the Kentucky Rifle. The invention of percussion ignition, in 1807, caused the flint-lock to disappear from the Kentucky Rifle, but the new system was installed on all new guns and the old rifles were altered to use it.

Some of the early makers of the rifle in Kentucky, were the O'Bryans, at Lexington; Settles in Barren and Green counties; Mills at Harrodsburg; and Hawken, who made rifles in Louisville when he was young but later moved to St. Louis where he gained fame as a Kentucky Rifle maker. But every neighborhood had its gunsmith and the general average of their output was very high.

Some of the feats of the marksmen with the Kentucky Rifle, such as driving nails at 100 yards, putting out candles, "barking" squirrels, shooting the heads off of turkeys, and cups of whiskey off of the heads of confiding friends, have been themes for song and story since the first settlement in Kentucky.

The Kentucky Rifle has long been beloved by collectors and many

excellent public and private collections are owned throughout the nation. The public ones in Kentucky are at the Kentucky State Historical Society, Frankfort; the Old Fort, Harrodsburg; and the Filson Club, Louisville.

At the present time old Kentucky Rifle "shoots" are bing held at Rising Sun, Ind., where a club of 650 members meets yearly.

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TRADITIONS AND SUPERSTITIONS

1. The woman would say, there is an unbeliever in the room - WRAP. Then the noise of a wrapping sound would begin.

2. Dog howling means death.

3. If a rooster stands in a door and turns his head out to crow means death.

4. If a bird flies in the house means death.

5. Don't let a blonde woman be first to enter your house after New Years. This would be bad luck. A dark person entering first would indicate good luck.

6. Don't let a woman be the first to enter your houses on Monday - bad luck.

7. A woman able to take fire out from one who is burned. If she knows where one is burned, she can lay her own hands on that part of here body and say certain words but can't tell a woman what they are. Be cured before she gets to the patient.

8. Take a piece of clothes "next to the hide" and burn to cure a spasm.

9. This woman told, an unbeliever who weighed 200, to sit in a bhair and she would make it "walk". He sat down, the chair began to walk one leg at a time. The man got up and said "you win".

10. In dressing a baby, put clothes on over a girls head. It is bad luck to draw over feet. To dress a boy, put clothes over feet.

11. If a cow looses her cud, she is to be given a greasy dishrag.

12. Potatoes planted in the dark of the moon make good potatoes; in the light go to tops or vines.

13. Plant beans when the sign is in arm and there will be more abundant crop.

14. If a woman crosses a cucumber vine, watermelon vine or cantelope vine, it will die.

15. A ring around the moon donates rain; the number of stars inside indicating the number of days until it rains.

16. To dream of seeing a hearse is good luck.

17. To dream of a wedding is a sign of death.

18. To dream of a death is a sign of a wedding.

19. Thirteen is a lucky number

20. To dig up bones is a sign of a funeral.

21. To break a mirror is seven years bad luck.

22. Blue gum negro denotes a mean one.

23. Eyes with a coat of green shows great strength of character and determination.

24. To dream of white clothes denote sickness.

25. To dream of seeing corn growing denotes sickness.

26. Wishes come true by prayers.

27. If snow crackles, it will lay on a long time.

28. If when the fire burns it sometimes sounds like people treading on snow tis sign of falling snow.

29. Smoke flies low sign of rain.

30. To spill salt sign of a fuss.

31. If one looses something and spit in hand to find direction to help find same.

32. Count each white horse you see u til you get 100 and the first red headed girl you see will be your wife.

(WPA)

Jackson, Thomas A. 240

Louisville, Kentucky.

Folklore & Customs: "Beliefs in Dreams."

Of the many superstitions that are so prevalent among negroes, the most outstanding ones are dreams, or superstitions deriving from dreams. Practically all negroes believe very sincerely in their dreams. Many of them have apparently come true, because many a negro have banked their bank rolls on their dreams. As the result of many dreams, large bank rolls have dwindled and diminished to nothing, or vice versa. For, on the other hand, many large fortunes have been made, only through the results of dreams.

Everyone knows how well the negro is attached to the many gypsy dream books, that are on sale at the many book stores in our cities and towns, including some of the most exclusive book stores. Very few negroes are found, that are able to read or write, that does not possess a dream book of some form or the other. Like any other book, the dream book comes in several different types, and are used for more than one purpose. The most popular use of the dream book in most sections of this country populated with negroes, is to get number plays from.

Now, the "numbers" to a great many negroes, are a thousand or more fortunes, available to those who have a few pennies and who had a good dream the night before. Why does the negro care so much for the numbers? This question, has been asked more than a million times, and the answer is - because they think and feel that some day, they will get a whole lots of "something" for a little bit of "nothing." One of the weakest traits of mankind, is that trend of thought of gaining a "gold mine," with a hand full of "sand grains." And for this reason the "numbers" are appealing to the Negro. And to catch the numbers, I have been told, one must first have a dream and then look its

numbers up. Of course each dream has a different set of numbers. In the southland and mid-western sections of the country the "dream numbers," differ greatly from those of the east, because the numbers themselves differ greatly. In the east one number is played, in the south, several numbers are played. But they all carry the same trend of thought, that of gaining a whole lots, for a little of nothing.

The negro apparently have more dreams than anyone else, for they certainly believe in their dreams the most. They are more easily persuaded to buy dream books than anyone else, and they certainly are more enthused over them, than anyone else.

Some apply their dreams to their life around them, their work, associates and their general routine of human endeavor. Many negroes of this class, claim astonishing results. May it be said that - while a man sleeps, the spirit plays, and as the spirits plays, the man dreams, when a man dreams he knows not that he sleeps, and when he sleeps, he knows not that he dreams.

There are negroes that will go to sleep any time of the day for the sole purpose of dreaming, and if he does not have a dream, he is deeply, disappointed. If he has certain dreams, he believes that he is headed for good fortune, and good luck. And, if he has certain other dreams, then ill fortune is approaching him.

It is believed and also in print, that if a person dreams of clear water, that it is a dream of good luck, and if they dream of muddy water, that is a dream of bad luck. That if a person dreams of currency money, good fortune is waiting for the dreamer, and a dream of coin money, vice versa. Such beliefs are to numerous to mention here in this article. But, the beliefs in dreams among negroes are practically universal, and many fortunes have been made from their strong beliefs in dreams.

WPA

Written by
Everett Bishop
Pineville, Ky

Subject
Will & Lillie Jones
Greenbrier Creek, Ky.

"I T ' D S U R P R I S E ' E M"

"I thought I was going to get one of my kids, at least, to go on through High
High School," said Lillie Jones, "but Kelly, that's my oldest went 'bout three or four months, and then quit and joined these yer three C's. He went and stayed in two years, worked his self up till he was getting forty five dollars a month. I saved all his money 'bout fur 'im. As soons he comes back home, he jumped up and married a little old scissor tail gal that don't know no more 'bout housework than a two year old youngun. They'er living out to theirself over ther in that shack."

"If I knowed Kelly ud done what he went and done," said his father, Charlie, I'd never saved a red cent of his money for him. I jist figured that when he come out, he'd go on to school or either get in some kind of business but he jist flopped. My next oldest boy, Murphie, went put nigh two years to high school and took a fool notion he'd jine the three C's too. He's only been in six months. He promised me he wouldn't do like Kelly if I'd save him part of his money. I hain't yet and don't know whether I will or not."

" Charlie Jones, with Lillie, his wife and five children live over on the waters of Greenbrier, a tributary of the Cumberland River, near Pineville, Ky. For twenty odd years, they have lived in a little four room, house, which has seen no paint and but minor repairs in all that time. Mr. Jones, says, the place begins to seem like home to him.

When I called recently he and his wife were very cordial and told me as best they could, some of their life history. "I've lived here 'bout ever since me and Lillie thar, got married. That's been 'bout twenty, some six or seven years ago. Told Lillie the tother day I'd lived yer so long it'd

begun to seem like home to me. Shucks, I don't believe in movin' 'round so much. Some people says that a rollin' stone don't gather no moss and some others says that a setting hen don't have no feathers. I used to tell it on Mack, a neighbor, that when he used to live 'round mining camps so much and move from place to place, what few chickens he had would come up and lay down on their backs and cross their feet to be tied every time his rent come due, so they could be moved."

My pop has been dead fur twenty years or more. Old man Cal Marcle(Miracle) killed my pop and two women all the same day and hunted some more people to kill. The rest of 'em was hid. He claimed all of 'em had swore lies in a trial on him. He got executed over it, of course. Hain't nuthin' makes me madder than to have somebody to tell or swear to a lie on me."

"I'll bet you never seen a generation of people more kin than mine and Lillie's folks- and younguns. My two brothers married two of Lillie's sisters and two of my sisters married two of her brothers. That throws all our children to be double first cousins. I reckon thats as close a kin as they can be 'cept theys brothers and sisters.

" 'Bout all the public work I ever done, was workin' in the mines. I haven't done none of that in the last seventeen years, since I got smashed up. I had to lay in bed for over a year. Hain't walked a step since without my crutches. I got a purty good little pile out of gettin' hurt. See, I got the same as a man's wife or dependents gets when he gits killed 'cause I got my back broke and mashed up in the hips. The doctors all said I'd never work no more, if I ever set up anymore it'd surprise 'em, for they said the spinal cord was jist barely hanging and might come intwo any time. But I've been riding my mare to town peddling our milk and stuff right along. I bought my home out of my compensation money and spend it for first one thing and then 'nuther. I've got in some purty hard places, a few times. See they weren't nairy one of my boys big enuff to work and we just had to do anything

to keep the wolf out of the house.

"I got to studyin' that they weren't much left to do but to go selling liquor. They weren't none of this red whiskey anywhere in them days and moonshine brought anywhere from ten to twenty dollars a gallon. I couldn't get 'round over the woods to make it, so I hired a fellar to come and stay with me to make for me. I could or bought it wholesale and resold it again but it didn't cost near so much to make it as it did to buy it. I'd sell it here at the house or take it to town. I had me a whole bunch of half gallon jars painted white on the outside, so I could fill 'em with whiskey and a body would think it was only milk I was peddlin' out.

"Lillie who had been listening to her husband broke into the conversation. " Well its soon gonna be plantin' time again. I want us to raise nuf-fodder and stuff to do us thru this year. I'll tell you when poor people goes to buying meat, lard and everything, they have a hard time.

"Yes", replied Charlie, "Ever purty day what comes now abody ort to be out fencing or grubbin' or somethin', cause way times is now, ever' thin' is so uncertain that it 'pears like, if he don't raise it, he hain't gona have it to eat.

"The youngest child we've got is seven years old, I told Charles", said Mrs. Jones, placing her fore and middle finger against her lips, spitting a stream of tobacco and snuff through them that we'd jist quit raisin' younguns and go to raisin' somethin' to feed these we've got 'ow. I toll you I don't see whats gonna become of all these poor little younguns what bein' borned into this world and nuthin' fer 'em to do, fur a livin' when they grow up.

"Well," said Charlie, "I thought you wuz a good church member and well read in the Scriptures to know that the Bible said multiply the earth. Ye know the Lord ain't gonna let no little children starve to death."

"I gommies, " replied Mrs. Jones, "I know a whole heap of people thats c c no account now that they let their younguns very near starve to death.

To change the subject, Mr. Jones said; "Looks like winter slipped up on us whilst we's asleep last night, don't it? "

"Knowed its gonna be bad las' night," sighed Mrs. Jones, " 'cause them hogs out there jist raised sand and fussed all night 'fore we all went to bed and thats a shore sign of bad weather. I'll tell ye another shore sign is when them old hoot owns hollers on the north side of Pine Mountain over thar, it will shore rain or snow inside twenty four hours.

"Don't believe in none uh them witch tales", said Mr. Jones, "I believe whats to be, will be and what hain't to be, might be."

Miriam Gaines

FOLKLORE:

Four thousand superstitions have been definitely collected in Ky., according to Dr. D. L. Thomas, former president of the Ky. Folklore Society. The claim that Ky, mountain folk speak in the purest strain of old English to be found anywhere is based on the fact that the main linguistic, strata of Ky. colonial immigration is drawn from the gentry class of England, in the early 17th century. These came to Va., in 1607, and later moved over the borderline into Ky. This class was steeped in the English of King James version of the Bible (published in 1611), and in the language of Shakespeare, whose death occurred in 1616. These American colonists were therefore "embalmed" in the two greatest and most familiar classics of modern English.

Later immigration to the American colonies was drawn from other less cultured groups of peasant English and the indentured servant classes. The isolation of these early settlers in the inaccessible mountain fastnesses, however, preserved the old English idioms throughout succeeding generations down to the present time.

Folk sayings, songs, superstitions and customs are readily discerned by students of folklore as belonging to this period, three centuries back, and to that class of old England. The Scotch-Irish immigration, it is held, had small influence on the speech. The negro dialect is credited to a corruption of the Va. Planter English. The language of Kentucky mountain folk was shaped from the first comers.

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Folklore & Customs: Kentucky Ballads

Kentucky is uniquely rich in Folk-lore, particularly so in balladry, ancient and modern.

Many pioneers who followed the rough trails blazed by Dr. Thos. Walker, Ambrose Powell, Daniel Boone and others, reached the mountains which divided the older colonies from the new, and there remained.

They had lands, broad and deep, (especially deep), to take for their own, providing they could hold them. Subsequent history proves that with them "to have and to hold", meant one and the same thing.

Not only in quality and quantity of folk material does Kentucky rank many of her sister states, the great variety brought by descendants of old world craftsmen is astounding. Stone cutters, miners, tailors, brewers, and bankers, barbers and barristers, shepherds and farmers, soldiers and sailors, all brought their specific ballads reciting the joys and sorrows, hopes and fears, of their respective groups.

These groups, unadulterated by marriage with "furriners" as outsiders are termed, retain much of the original form of the ballads sung by their over-seas forebears.

It is possible to find mountain folk singing words not fully understood simply because they were so handed down by word of mouth.

An example of the loss of words no longer in use is found in "The Troubadour of Provence", still sung in Marion County by descendants of the French refugees who came into this Country in the late years of the 18th century. The lines: "Sometimes beneath the 'mellow moon' or when the stars were soft", are sung "sometimes beneath the 'Miller's Moon', some times 'beneath the roof', and 'I a Troubadour' is given, 'I a true-do-or'."

These ballad singers of Kentucky are versatile: What is called "Lonesome Tunes", slow and pathetic, richly deserve the appellation, and "Lively Tunes" are lively indeed.

In some portion of nearly every county in Kentucky are found the religious songs of English Irish and Scottish derivation. In some localities "The Bellman's Good-Morrow" is sung to the air of "Awake, Awake O England", and the old English words and phrasing, "From sluggishe sleepe and slumber, good christians all arouse" are well preserved.

The following ballads are sung in their old form in various counties:

The Six Kings Daughters.

The Merry Golden Tree.

Sweet Ha's Ghost.

Little Musgrave.

The Cherry Tree Carol.

The Wife of Ushor's Well.

The Scolding Wife. (The Devil and Tom Walker).

Barbara Allen.

Lord Randal - Proud Masie - Babes in the Wood.

Customs we learn earliest last longest in our memories. Regardless of intrinse's merits, we love most those associations of earliest memory. So the families who stopped to "rest a spell" in the Kentucky mountains on their west-ward trek, retold the tales of Old England, Scotland or Ireland, the "elders" to the "least-uns", from generation to generation.

These tales, dances and songs constituted their 'diversion' and when we remember the great influence exercised by the "King's fool" (Court Jester) in matters of moment, we realize the important part played by the songs and tales of long ago.

Many earnest students of psychology trace, the origin of feuds to ballads reciting the glories of clan warfare. A death resulting from a feud is never spoken of as a "Murder", just a "killin". The Marcum-Hargis feud of Breathitt County furnished material for a ballad patterned after the noted American ballad "Jesse James." This personal war (feud) was between two leading families of Breathitt County, one head, was a noted lawyer; of the other, a Judge who had once been a United States Senator.

The far-reaching effect of the Floyd Collins disaster with its varied interpretation, well illustrate folk psychology, basis of all great movements of human thinking.

Tolstoy believed all great art to be an expression of the life of the people.

Troubadour of Provence:

The "Fiddling Frenchman", a character in Cotton Noe's delightful story of E. Kentucky was suggested by the old French folk song heard in his childhood. Descendants of the French settlers in Marion County still sing it:

"Oh I was once a troubadour in Provence, long ago
And wandered up and down the earth, sometimes in rain and snow,
Sometimes beneath the mellow moon or when the stars were soft,
And oft beneath your window pane, oh, many a time and oft,
I sang the age-old song of love unto a trembling lyre,
And told the story of my heart as with a tongue of fire,
But always there was some Sir Knight, just back from Palestine,
With legends of the Great Crusades to free the holy shrine:
Or maybe back from far Poitiers or back from Agiu Court,
With scars upon his coat of mail, and I, a troubadour,
With nothing but a battered lyre and a song to win your heart;

And you loved only tales of war, and scorned my lowly art.
But, I'm a modern minstrel now, and sing beneath your pane,
The oldest ballad of the world, as ancient as the rain,
And yet I fear there's some Sir Knight, just back from recent wars,
With scars upon his ancient cross fighting minotaurs, (mythical monstrosities)
Since you regard my song no more than in the long ago,
When I was just a troubadour out in the rain and snow."

"Ben Bolt" an American ballad of world wide fame, very popular in central Kentucky, was written in Western Virginia, near Tazewell and commemorates the tragic death of one Alice Browne, who died of grief at hearing of the death of one of Gov. Spotsword's "Knights of the Golden Horseshoe". The sad part of it is, the Knight returned, but had forgotten "Sweet Alice."

Superstitions held by Kentucky country folk in general:

Cures:

Cure for warts: Steal a dish rag and bury in a stump. As the rag rots the wart will disappear. For Thrush: Have a person who has never seen his own father blow breath into mouth of the child.

Cure for Rheumatism or Lumbago: Carry a buckeye or the last potatoe taken from a hill, in the pocket.

If a child is afflicted with Asthma or Consumption, he can be cured by placing a lock of his hair in a hole in a tree higher than the child's head.

Neuralgia or quinsey is prevented by wearing a sour bug around the neck.

Bleeding of wound may be stopped by the touch of a seventh son or daughter. Bleeding is also stopped by putting spider's webs on the wound.

Superstitions of Outlying Agricultural Districts and Mountain Regions:

Witches: Means of Identification.

If a witch goes to church she will sit with her back towards the preacher. An old woman with but one tooth, may safely be put down as belonging to this hellish class.

When a witch is at her mischief she is invisible to all except the one she is bewitching.

If a horse's mane is matted in the morning, it is certain a witch has ridden him during the night.

To Break Spells:

To keep witches from riding horses at night, braid cornhusks into your horse's mane.

Should a witch prove too troublesome, get her picture - you may have to draw it, - paste it upon a wall and drive a nail through the place where the heart should be. For nine consecutive days give the nail a tap with a hammer. On the 9th day the witch will die.

Jackson, Thomas A. (Colored) S. 240

Louisville, Kentucky. (WPA)

Folklore & Customs: Conjuring.

Up in the blue grass section of Kentucky, a few miles out of Lexington, lives an elderly old colored woman, popularly known as Aunt Liza Davis. As one approaches Aunt Liza and carsfully scrutinizes her they will readily see many trinkets, ornaments and charms glittering and sparkling around and about her, as she sits rocking back and forth in a rockerless, rocking chair, in which she is well accustomed to. This chair being Aunt Liza's favorite for comfort is in use hour after hours.

Around her neck is tied a little cloth bag with a faded red string due to its age. Tied around each ankle above her expansive bare feet is tied another string, on this string, one will see peculiar looking coins of silver, copper, and what not, which more than display their ages. Each of these coins have a hole through them and a knot tied in the string after each coin so as to keep them completed as separate from one another.

If you ask the old woman about her charms and superstition, she avoids the question altogether with a dry laugh and adds, "Don't know not'in 'bout dat stuff."

"But you have on a conjure bag and charms around your neck and ankles."

She looks surprised ~~and~~ and passes a scrawny hand up and down her wrinkled throat and says, "What dat?" "Oh' child sho'ly reckon so, but dat bag I'se done had it a long time." "Its not'in special, jus' de bag I'se done wore sence Gram'ma give me de hoodoo power when I'se a gal." "Got to wear it now, 'ter be on de safe side."

We asked Aunt Liza if she could use any hoodoo power if she wanted too, or cast any spells on people?

Her reply was, "I'se aint say'in I can, and I'se aint say'in I'se cant."

Then we asked her if she had ever casted any spells? This question did not fit in so well.

She said, "Now look'er here you 'imps', you'se meddling with somebody dat minds her bees'ness and don't meddles with no'bod'ies, else's bees'ness." "Now you'se try'in to be too smart." "I'se jus' ain't gon'na say not'in else to non' of you."

Of course, we offered our apologies and sorrows for the little misunderstanding. She was easily won over again, for she asked us for some tobacoo from some cigarettes, to smoke in her twenty year old stone pipe. The smoke from her pipe smells strong enough to knock out "Golgorondo, the mighty giant.

Aunt Liza like most old survivers, is loath to tell what she knows of conjure lore. Part of the power of charms seem to lie in a silent acceptance of their potency, and unquestioning reliance on their efficacy to work wonders.

But deep in the negroes' nature lies superstition, drawn directly from the virbrant voodoos of the Dark Continent. Most of the old slaves had living contacts with native Africans, who believed implicitly in charm practices and who adopted them readily to the plantation life of their fellows.

There are many superstitions even today among negroes that relates to every activity of life - to personal relations, work, play, to religion, desires, diseases and the common run of good and bad fortunes. There are secret voodoo meetings being held at the present day although very few people ever learn of them. At these meetings usually some secret manipulator of the fates instructs and introduces some charms of the fate to his followers, of course very little of these meetings are ever known. Sometimes these meetings are held in the heart of some woods thickly populated with tall trees and brush. And these people that possess the power of conjure, have in their possession all sorts of mysterious fetiches that are supposed to bring or ward off the evil influence that have been casted on the victims by their enemies. Among the

fetiches are such as, dry bones of reptiles, feathers of vultures, stones of unknown sources and weird looking skeletons, that look like death brought to life again.

Aunt Liza has collections of these mysterious things, but she will not show with free will. But as one sits in her middle room, which is her bedroom, many objects of mystery may be seen. Some of these objects are candles of peculiar shapes. She claims that the burning of these candles at a certain hour of the night, will reveal to her, the actions of her fellowmen, and their fellowmen. She was asked, "What are some of the things that she seen?" Her reply was, "I'se done seen things happin 'round dis' country dat nobody elses' seen and I sees dem' stil'. But youse wouldn't b'lieve de things you see wid dose leet'te eye you'se got der in yo big head, cause you don't knot You is too curious 'bout ebby'thin'. You'se wan'na knows ebby'thing, wid out, blieving not'in. And as long as you b'lieve not'in you'se ain't gon'na knows not'in. Whin I'se a gal, I'se knows more den you'se knows now." Naturally I agreed with everything that she had to say in order to hold the conversation with her. Aunt Liza is very sensitive and quick tempered, and will close up tighter than a clam if she thinks the least bit, that people might be using her for ill will.

She explains the purpose of many of the charms. Such as the "Conjure bag" which consisted of a small red flannel cloth, containing some bones of a frog, a piece of snake skin, some horse hairs and a spoon full of ashes. This bag is used to hoodoo an enemy. Placed anywhere about the house of the person to be affected, preferably under the door-step will cause a whole series of misfortunes, including sickness, blindness, fits and various of other spells. Now, the only way to break this spell, after they have been casted on a person, is to engage a conjure doctor and have him to break the spell.

The wearing of charm bags around the neck was explained. These bags are supposed to ward off spells and as a precaution against sickness, accident and

bad luck, generally this is universal among the people who believe in these things. For, in nearly every negro newspaper in this country, carries adds in their papers for such things as good luck charms, bad luck charms and good health charms.

Nearly all of the Old-timers have two or three kinds of charms, which they value at an inestimatable price. In fact they practically worship their mysterious possessions.